

12-2017

# Black Behind the Ear: Using Motion Graphics to Encourage Self-awareness and Embrace Racial Heritage.

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# Black Behind the Ear

Using Motion Graphics to Encourage Self-awareness and Embrace Racial Heritage.

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**Carolina Lopez**

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Fine Arts in Visual Communication Design.

School of Design,  
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Approved on December, 2017

## Thesis Committee Approval

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Members**

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Signature	Date
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## Abstract

### **Black Behind the Ear: Using Motion Graphics to Encourage Self-awareness and Embrace Racial Heritage.**

Carolina Lopez Corominas

***Black Behind the Ear*** is an animated visual representation of Elizabeth Acevedo's poem "Hair". This poem uses hair as a metaphorical element to represent the internalized racism and racial amnesia predominant in the Dominican Republic, a place that owes African slaves for much of the island's racial, and cultural heritage.

This motion graphics piece intends to encourage self-awareness in a time when embracing one's culture and race can break the ossified schemes passed through generations about personality standards based on physical attributes. Understanding where one comes from helps people see why certain ideas are worth standing for, and consequently results in many antiquated, inaccurate stereotypes derived from ignorance being banish. Hopefully ***Black Behind the Ear*** will be part of this liberating process.

#### Keywords

Design

Motion Graphics Design

Computer Graphics Design

Sociology

Anthropology

Racism

Internalized racism

## Introduction

Racism as defined by Marta I. Cruz-Janzen (2003), is the ability to limit a person's choices and options based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, home language or tribal affiliation. This term is commonly perceived as an action made from one individual (or group) towards other, Padilla (2001) proposes an additional dimension to racism. His research found individuals experience an "internalized racism" by accepting they are inferior to others based on what society has taught them to believe.

In a country where skin tones vary greatly and where vibrant colors and different flavors represent a daring, vibrant culture, we ask ourselves could racism exist there?

Does racism exist in the Dominican Republic? Or more so, does internalized racism exist in the Dominican Republic?

A strong concept imposed throughout generations misleading the youth on beauty standards, forcing the population to forget great part of the Dominican history and its leaders, always pursuing to assimilate to something or someone foreign in order to be part of a respected society and/or to be taken seriously.

However, it is noticeable, the offspring of past generations who nowadays stand up against these standards to encourage the younger to embrace their heritage and understand their history. In order to support and visually represent what this group stands for and encourage the population to become self-aware several symbols and abstract shapes are combined in this project along with Elizabeth Acevedo's poem "hair" to embrace racial heritage.

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Cruz-Janzen, Marta I. "Out of the Closet: Racial Amnesia, Avoidance, and Denial. Racism among Puerto Ricans." *Race, Gender & Class*, 2003, 64-81.

Padilla, Laura M. "'But You Are Not a Dirty Mexican' Internalized Oppression, Latinos and Law." *Texas Hispanic Journal of Law and Policy*, 2001, 59-113.

The story of ***Black Behind the Ear*** consist of a series 2D illustrations composed to visually represent the emotional journey a Dominican woman takes to break the standards her past has set on her on what to look like and aspire to. How during the process of something that seems insignificant there's much deeper thought, the realization that by denying her true self she's rejecting her ancestors who fought for her freedom and are part of who she is today.

This motion graphics piece utilizes cel animation techniques with a stop motion style to represent the craft and pureness of the character's journey. Motion Graphics is a field that has not yet tried to approach this issue as an important social subject that should be addressed to bring awareness and self-reflection. The only videos that could be compared to this project are either documentaries or video blogs but their main focus is racism rather than internalized racism. Also, this project maintains aesthetic and entertainment values through motion graphics rather than an informative, straight-to-the-point style.

## Review of Literature

### Overview

Four areas of research (history, art education, aesthetics and digital art) were used in ***Black Behind the Ear*** as a way to ensure the effectiveness of the piece.

Books and essays were used for understanding the historical foundation of contemporary media portrayal and people's perception. For aesthetics and technical resources, books, designers, and webpages served as inspiration as well as tutorials for software support.

### History and Context

#### 1. Mujer y la Esclavitud en Santo Domingo (Women and Slavery in Santo Domingo)

Batista, Celsa Albert. *Mujer Y Esclavitud En Santo Domingo*. Santo Domingo: CEDEE, 1993.

This book focuses on the women and their roles during the pre-colonial era. It explains how African women arrived and their roles as “slave producers” as well as their integration to slave work.

In addition to the past, Batista also adds the cultural factors that Dominican Republic inherited from the African culture, such as artifacts, music, religion, culinary art and artisan expressions. It describes the social status of African women and the color discrimination developed in Dominican Republic.

#### 2. Criollos—El Nacimiento De La Identidad Americana Y De La Cultura Americana En La Hispaniola (Criollos: The Birth of a Dynamic New Indo - Afro - European People and Culture on Hispaniola)

Guitar, Lyan. *Criollos—El Nacimiento De La Identidad Americana Y De La Cultura Americana En La Hispaniola*, Vanderbilt University

This article focuses on the history of the race integration developed in

## Review of Literature

the Island “La Hispaniola”. Which race predominated according to the location and the reasons of why certain locations had more Africans than others that were predominantly Spaniards.

### 3. Identidad cultural y religiosidad popular (Cultural Identity and Popular Religion)

Andújar Persinal, Carlos. *Identidad Cultural Y Religiosidad Popular*. Santo Domingo, República Dominicana: Editora Cole, 1999.

The sociologist, Carlos Andújar, focuses on the racial amnesia that has been developed in Dominican Republic for centuries and explains the cultural identity and how connected it is to the African culture.

### 4. Black in Latin America

Gates, Henry Louis. “Black Behind the Ears.” *In Black in Latin America*, 119-45. NYU Press, 2011. Accessed September 12, 2016. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qfpmh.8](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qfpmh.8).

This book talks about how Latin Americans identify themselves and how they react towards being called African.

In the chapter called: The Dominican Republic: “Black behind the Ear” Gates specifies how the Dominican culture praises the Spaniard regardless of the mistreatment towards the Taínos (Dominicans indigenous) and reject the Africans who were the ones that, in combination with the Taínos, fought for their freedom.

It encourages you to reflect on how significant decisions, for example how the Dominican Independence Day wasn’t when the Spaniard left, but when the Haitians left, which proves that the discrimination and rejection towards the blacks has been present for centuries.

## Review of Literature

### 5. Out of the Closet: Racial Amnesia, Avoidance, and Denial. Racism Among Puerto Ricans.

Cruz-Janzen, Marta I. "Out of the Closet: Racial Amnesia, Avoidance, and Denial. Racism among Puerto Ricans." *Race, Gender & Class*, 2003, 64-81.

This article demonstrates a current situation on racial acknowledgment in Puerto Rico. This circumstance is similar to the one in the Dominican Republic helping the viewer to understand how race is handled in the Caribbean and what thoughts exist on the matter .

### 6. Viewing Videos: Class, Differences, Black Women and Interpretations of Black Femininity.

Wingfield, Adia Harvey, and Melinda Mills. "Viewing Videos: Class, Differences, Black Women and Interpretations of Black Femininity." *Race, Gender & Class*, 2012, 348-67.

To understand the many reasons why societies such as the Dominican avoid being related to a black community such as Africans, "Viewing Videos" explains how the pop culture had been portraying black women as something negative to society.

Consequently, everything related to "black" could be considered as vulgar, promiscuous, violent, uneducated, dirty and many other descriptions that are implied from movies, music videos and lyrics.

It demonstrated, via a focus group, when showing current Rap music videos to black women, how false these representations were and they agreed it contribute to the negative perception some societies had about colored women.

## Review of Literature

### 7. Muñeco negro y muñeco blanco. (Black doll and white doll)

[Http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmixZ0qzhrW4OgdgZaxZu3w](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmixZ0qzhrW4OgdgZaxZu3w). “Contacta Psicólogos. Experimento Kenneth Y Mamie Clark. Muñeco Negro Y Muñeco Blanco. Español.” YouTube. 2014. Accessed October 13, 2016. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoofU7XbD\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoofU7XbD_A).

This psychology experiment is the only project close to this project’s goal.

It presents Dominican children who are being asked about several situations and who is the responsible for each. The experiment demonstrates how Dominicans see themselves and how they react towards a colored person not even feeling a marginal relationship with a dark skin people.

Nevertheless it isn’t considered a fast paced piece that is targeted to the Dominican youth. This type of video is ordinarily used for research or teaching but not as a social media piece.

### **Educating through art.**

### 8. Use of Poetry to Facilitate Communication about Diversity: An Educational Model.

Blake, Michelle Emery, and Suzie T. Cashwell. “Use of Poetry to Facilitate Communication about Diversity: An Educational Model.” *Race, Gender & Class*, 2003, 96-108.

This article reveals experimental education with other tools such as Poems and how receptive people were of using this method.

Metaphor is described as “explaining the unexplainable” (Hynes1988) and “can further enrich communication through persuasion” (Sopory & Dillard 2002). Subsequently, it would be considered “good media” to encourage self-reflection to a society with respect to their actions and way of thinking.

## Review of Literature

This form of communication can make the message more relatable, personal and for such topic as “Black Behind the Ear” is trying to approach, this method could inspire each person to embrace his or her true self and encourage social empowerment.

### **Motion Graphics and Art (Tutorials and Inspiration)**

#### 9. Cándido Bidó: El Artista y su Obra (Cándido Bidó: The Artist and his Work)

Tolentino, Marianne De., and Cándido Bidó. *Cándido Bidó: El Artista Y Su Obra*. Barcelona: C. Bidó, 1980.

For this project’s visual style the main focus is to make it relatable with the Dominican Republic’s culture and people, therefore several Dominican artists were taken into consideration for the visuals of the design.

Cándido Bidó is one of the most famous fine artists from the Dominican Republic, his representative visual style could be recognized by any Dominican because of his bright selection of colors to represent the island and its people and his peculiar way of portraying the real country men and women.

This book shows his pieces explaining each aspect and the thinking behind them.

#### 10. República del Color (The Color Republic)

De Los Santos, Danilo. *República Del Color*.

Inspired by Héctor M. Valdez film, República del Color presents several Dominican artists and focuses on the color selection the Caribbean painters used to express their ideals and/or panoramas.

They also studied how for centuries color is used to represent the island for centuries and the reason behind those decision.



## Review of Literature

### 11. Beatriz Milhazes: Jardim Botânico.

Ostrander, Tobias, Tanya Barson, and Paulo Herkenhoff. *Beatriz Milhazes: Jardim Botânico*. Miami: Perez Art Museum Miami, 2014.

Beatriz Milhazes is a Brazilian fine artist, whose work is formed by colorful geometric shapes that create a collage of figures that work together to make a cohesive piece.

Artists like Milhazes are important for this project since it helps to form the basis for the color inspiration of this investigation as well as for how the transitions between scenes could look like.

### 12. Yadid Rubin: Plowed Color

Yadid Rubin: *Plowed Color*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2010.

As well as examining Latin American Art, it is also important to observe what else is being produced in the world.

Yadid Rubin is an Israeli fine artist whose basic shapes tell a whole story because of his use of color. His importance to color is a primordial factor for this project visual style, since at the end that's what is going to make the piece relatable and easy to understand.

### 12. Motion Graphics: New Directions in Motion Design

*Moving Graphics: New Directions in Motion Design = Les Nouvelles Tendances Du Motion Design*. Barcelona: Promopress, 2012.

This book presents several successful motion pieces. It helps this project by serving as an inspiration on what visuals work in the present and what is considered good motion graphics.

## Review of Literature

### 13. Cel Animation Tutorial

Colombolele. "How to Simulate Cel Animation Using After Effects." YouTube. 2015. Accessed October 13, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJi9NRvuz1I>.

Emanuele Colombo is a motion designer from Italy. He has created several After Effects tutorials in YouTube including this cel animation style.

To be able to accomplish the visual style goal of this project it's necessary to learn how cel animation works and how to create such style with the new digital tools available today.

## **Design Process**

### **Thesis Parameter**

Presentation: Poem Visualization

Format: Full HD 1920x1080

Length: 2:00 min

Frame Rate: 30 fps

Compression: H.264

Tools and Software:

Adobe After Effects

Adobe Photoshop

Adobe Illustrator

## Design Process

### Target Audience:



**Laura Martínez**

*“Black only me”*

Born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Age: 25

Likes big city lifestyle

Studies: Business, Graduate level

Race: Hispanic, “indio”

Social Class: Medium-high

Interests: Dance and going to the gym

Personal Values: Solidarity, humility.

Acknowledges her skin color as black but doesn't relate it to African heritage. Doesn't care being called “morena” (“sweet way to call a black girl”).

Doesn't mind hanging with other colored people and doesn't treat them differently

*“Making the race better”* when dating, is something in the back of her head.

Social Media preference:



**Carola Perez**

*“I love embracing my natural curls”*

Born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Age: 26

Likes nature and calm places

Studies: Management, Graduate level

Race: Hispanic, “indio”

Social Class: Medium

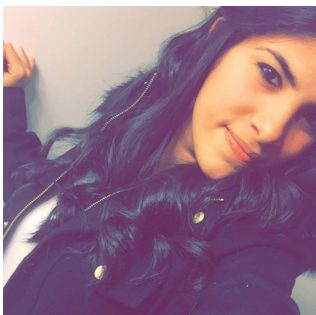
Interests: Music, dance, history

Personal Values: Honesty, respect and ethic

She is aware of her African heritage and thinks all dominicans should embrace their natural self. She accepts her looks and takes a stand on changing how society sees everything resembling to black.

She speaks her mind and embraces the dominican folklore.

Social Media preference:



**Patricia Guzmán**

*“I spent a long time and money in “fixing” my hair”*

Born in Santiago, Dominican Republic

Age: 22

Extroverted, enjoys social ambient and hanging out to parties

Studies: Law, Graduate level

Race: Hispanic, “indio”

Social Class: Medium-high

Interests: Dance, going out, fashion and dogs

Personal Values: Sympathy, Responsibility and Generosity.

She doesn't feel related to an African heritage at all. When she sees natural curly hair or afro she thinks of it as a “pajón” (messy hair). She wouldn't leave her hair in it's natural shape.

Places that she's interested in going are Europe, big cities in USA, Mexico and Punta Cana.

Social Media preference:



## Design Process

### Concept:

In 1833, one of the most well-known Dominican poet Juan Antonio Alix wrote the poem “El negro detrás de la oreja”. The poem became so influential that the title of the poem became a colloquialism meaning someone with the black behind its ear means that has an African ancestry but hides it.

The concept of this project was born from this phrase. This project embraces heritage rather than ignore it. It hopes to change “***Black Behind the Ear***” from an insult to a prideful descriptor, giving the audience an uplifting perspective of themselves.

## Design Process

### Storyline:

This project started focused on blurry racial lines and combining black and white was meant to get a sense of unity and love. The feel of the story was to be light and relaxed. However, after research on the topic and recent political and sociological situations racism is still very alive and must be addressed. The calm and relaxed sensations were uncalled for due to current situation. The story became aggressive, unsettling, and emotional.

The first half of the story represents the dark stage for most Dominicans before one learns to embrace their cultural heritage.

The story starts with several leaves looking shapes in different colors representing the colorful folklore predominant in the Caribbean. The leaves lose their strength and color because of the hand of the mother pulling all that heritage to something unreal resembling the hair.

Following that, a visual representation of the phrase in the poem that talks about our ancestor's past. Most specially, it talks about how they had to stand up for themselves, and how now the current population looks at them with hate and denial by walking away from them and running to a foreign land/color.

The second half of the story represents the lighter stage when a person starts to discover and accept themselves.

While the girl keeps running trying to figure out her identity, she jumps. After passing the chase she starts to figure out who she is by discovering her heritage. She fights what society imposes on her, and she runs and falls into all those words and arguments hiding her from her true self.

With the animation almost over, the birth of a cayenne flower is used to represent the new generation who will be self-aware and taught the importance of their history, that includes their mothers who stood for what is right.

## Design Process

At the end, we go back to the leaves symbolizing the start of the conversation with her mother. She stops her from hating their ancestors by shushing the conversation, instead she finishes the poem with “You can’t fix what was never broken” leaving the audience inspired to stand up for themselves whenever they feel words are hurting their past and their true self.

### Storyboard

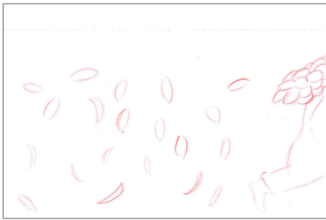
Throughout the making of *Black Behind the Ear* the visualization of the story along with its animation style changed from what was planned at the beginning. The first storyboard intended to be more abstract inspired by Beatriz Milhazes, Jardim Botânico botanical shapes where everything would be symbolized to go along Elizabeth Acevedo’s voice.

While doing more research on the target audience and finding more cultural references the design shifted form to include more symbolic figures that would accurately express, the feelings and phrases within the poem. Keeping the abstract concept intact the visuals became more significant and deeper in meaning.

Figure 1. Earliest version of Storyboard. Dec. 2016



Design Process



and would hate them how we do?



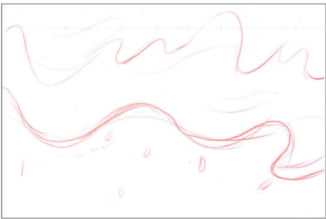
Trying to find ways to erase them out of our skin, iron them out of our hair,



this wild tangle of hair that strangles air.



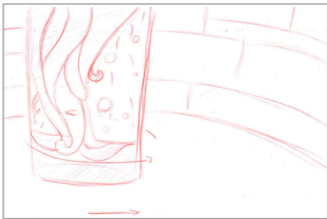
You call them wild curls. I call them breathing. Ancestors spiraling. Can't you see them in this wet hair that waves like hello?



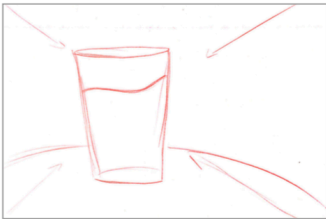
They say Dominicans can do the best hair. I mean they wash, set, flatten the spring in any loc



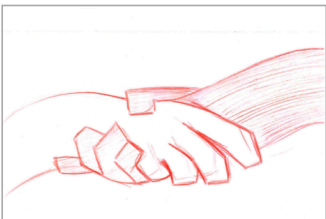
but what they mean is we're the best at swallowing amnesia,



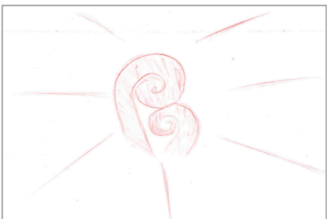
in a cup of "morir soñando", die dreaming because we'd rather do that than live in this reality,



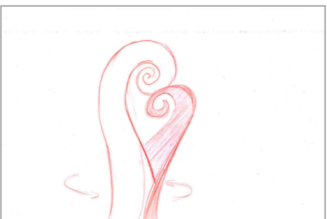
than live in this reality,



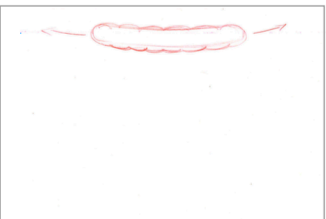
caught between orange juice and milk,



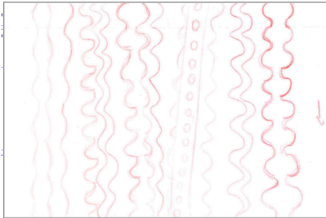
between reflections of the sun and whiteness.



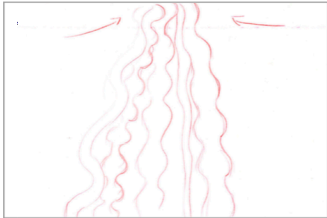
What they mean is, "Why would you date a black man?" What they mean is, "a prieto cocolo" What they mean is, "Why would two oppressed people come together? It's two times the trouble."



What they really mean is,



"Have you thought of your daughter's hair?"



And I don't tell them that we love like sugar cane,



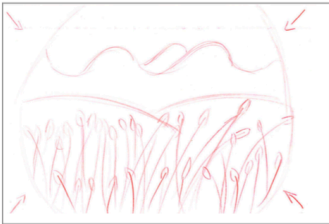
brown skin, pale flesh, meshed in pure sweetness.



The children of children of fields. Our bodies curve into one another like an echo,



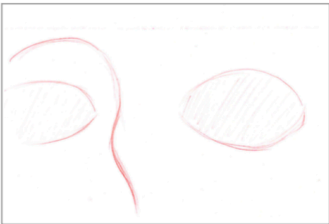
Design Process



and I let my curtain of curls blanket us from the world, how our children will be beautiful.



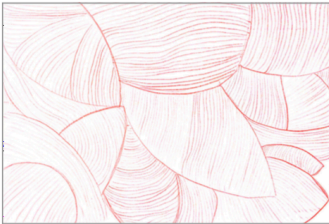
Of dust skin, and diamond eyes.



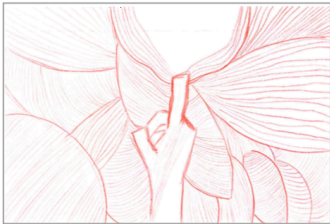
Hair, a reclamation.



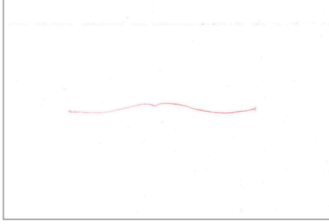
How I will break pride down their back so from the moment they leave the womb they will be born in love with themselves.



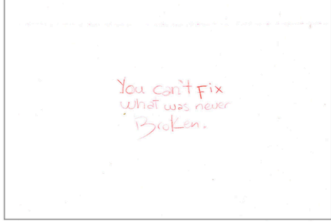
My mother tells me to fix my hair,



and so many words



remain unspoken. Because all I can reply is,

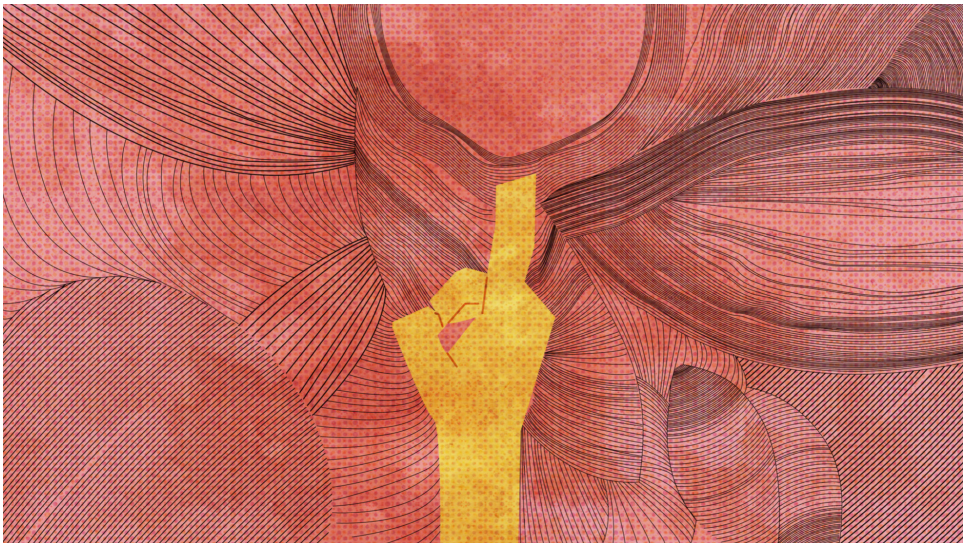


"You can't fix what was never broken."

## Design Process

Figure 2. Earliest version of style guide.

The earliest storyboard used many semi-geometric shapes with colorful patterns as textures.



## Design Process

In the latest version, the visuals shifted from an abstract and delicate shapes to more aggressive symbols and representation of the words said in order to create an aggressive feel along with representing femininity in the Caribbean.

The style and transitions transitioned towards stop motion animation style and stylized shapes and textures. Making the piece have an “crafty, handmade look and feel” in order to represent the struggle the ancestors had to go through to fight for their rights.

Figure 3. Latest version of style guide.





Design Process

Figure 4. Latest version of storyboard. September 2017

While the illustration and animation process, several illustrations and textures had to be added, changed or eliminated from the story.







## Design Process

Figure 5. Evolution of leaves shape and style. 2016-2017

### Shapes and Symbols Design

Throughout the animation there are several symbols related to the Dominican culture in order to connect with the target audience and stay true to the folklore.

In order to set a starting point for the illustrations, the first and most important shapes and symbols designed were the leafs and hand for the first frame. This would set up a style that needed to be followed within the entire piece.





## Design Process

Figure 6. Final look of leaves shape and style. August 2017

Throughout the design ideation for this piece it soon became noticeable that a strong concept in the poem stands out: the struggle of the ancestors to fight for their rights. All the dirt and pain they had to suffer sparked the idea that the style of the whole piece should feel raw, crafty and handmade.

Using simpler “charcoal” textures and noisy outlines, the feel needed to tell the story was found letting the colors and the animation tell the story by themselves, making the composition less complicated.



## Design Process

Cayenne flower:

The Cayenne flower usually called “Sangre de Cristo” (The Blood of Christ) is the national symbol in the Dominican Republic’s cultural garment, used in the woman’s hair. This flower is used in the animation to illustrate the new born children that will embrace their racial heritage as said in the poem.

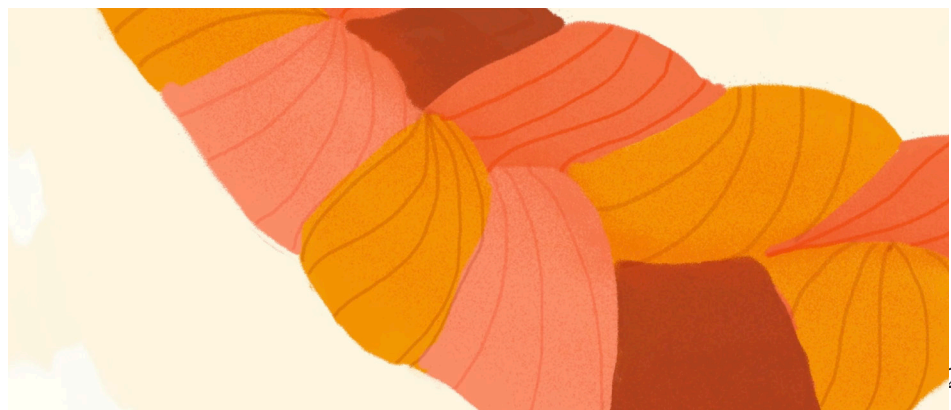
Figure 7. Cayenne Flower design. October 2017



The Braid:

Braids are a typical hairstyle used by young Dominican girls. Usually the girls are following their mother’s wishes to contain their natural hair in place. The braid illustration is used while the verse “And I let my curl of curls blanket us from the world” is being said to represent the little girl’s (ancestors) taking care of her from the world that was segregated in the transition before this scene.

Figure 8. The Braid design. November 2017





## Design Process

Woman without a face:

The woman without a face comes from a cultural doll from the Dominican Republic that represents the historic Dominican country woman, with its diversity in skin tones and colorful dresses to represent the racial mixture found in the island. The material for the dolls originally was made of clay, which is an abundant and easily procured material for the country man to use.

This Woman is used in the animation to represent the Dominican woman. The flowers and dress were part of the first stage of the design, but it developed to a body silhouette to get more shapes within the animation and to emphasize the strength of the girl.

Figure 9. Character Design based on Dominican doll. September 2017



## Design Process

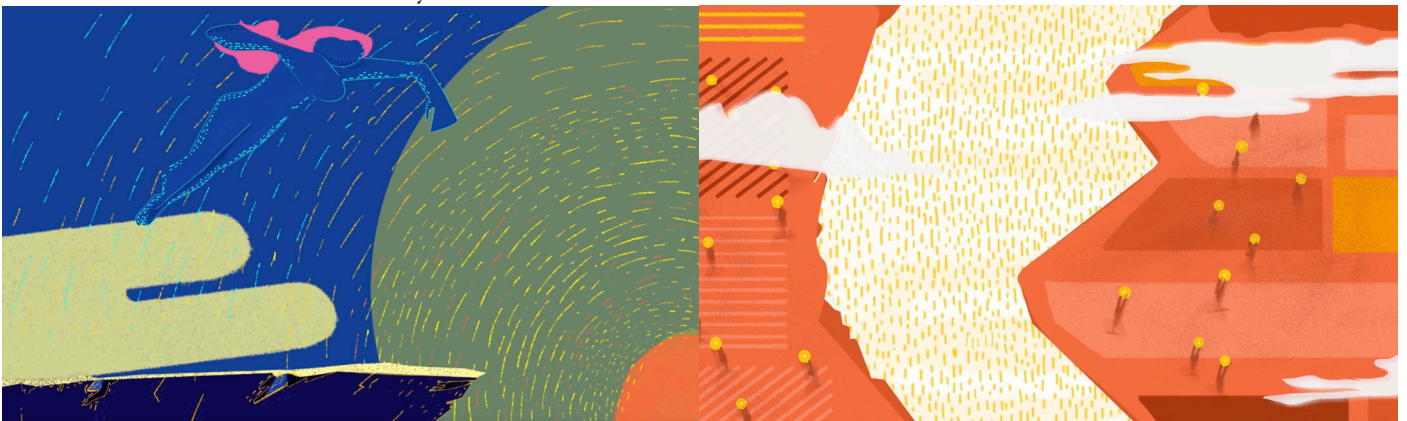
### Environments and Secondary Shapes

After doing the necessary research about Dominican symbols and deciding the direction of each scene, secondary artwork and backgrounds were the next step to achieve the visual goals of this project.

A key point always in mind while developing ***Black Behind the Ear*** was the fact that this whole story takes place in the Dominican Republic, a tropical island known for natural diversity and aquatic habitats; Therefore the environments used in this piece had to look like a tropical island somehow, in order to make it easier for the target audience to get a cohesive sense of place.

Mountains landscapes were used as environments for several scenes. Some scenes were dark and foggy representing the dark stages of this emotional process. Others scenes were bright and colorful to represent country fields, hard workers and the awake feeling the character has. Other scenes needed subdued backgrounds to highlight the foreground shapes. This was accomplished with patterns and textures to maintain a non distracting style and tone for each transition.

Figure 10. Enviroment designs.  
September-November 2017



## Design Process

### Color Palette

Choosing the color group for ***Black Behind the Ear*** was one of the most important decisions made. It went through several revisions during the design process to arrive at a final piece that works well together.

The color palette signifies a breaking point in the story. During the first half of the piece, the girl is in denial because of what her past generations (represented by the mother in the poem) has taught her. This dark emotional stage where she tries to escape to her true self and is represented with colors reminiscent of nighttime. The colors are cold with the exception of the character's hair to contrast with the darkness and to symbolize the strength of their heritage.



The second half comes as a sunrise to represent the awakening of the girl's mind towards something being wrong, trying now to run from all the stereotypes and beauty standards her past has set on her and looking forward to become self-aware. This stage is mainly based on warm bright colors which usually are used for optimism, passion, aggressiveness and strength.



## Design Process

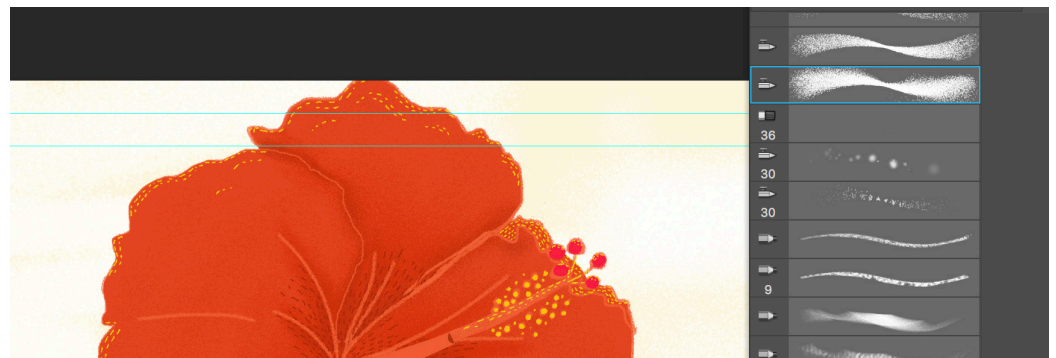
## Illustration

In order to achieve the decided crafty, handmade aesthetics; illustration and drawing were technical skills used with the support of Adobe Photoshop and a Wacom tablet to get the handmade feel as real as possible. Every pattern was hand drawn line by line, not a single one is being repeated as well as the texturing, shadows and highlights.

Some shapes were created in Adobe After Effects, rendered and post-produced in Adobe Photoshop to maintain the style.

Airbrushes and Charcoals brushes were the main tools to achieve the goal, by manually modifying these Photoshop brushes settings to the needed shape and scattering.

Figure 11.Brushes used during the texturing process.



## Design Process

### Cel Animation

One of the biggest challenges for this project was the fact that everything would be made in 2D using Adobe After Effects and Adobe Photoshop when needed to stay true to the craft and handmade feel. Therefore, most of the animation in this project was made frame by frame in Adobe Photoshop or rotoscoping and morphing shapes in After Effects.

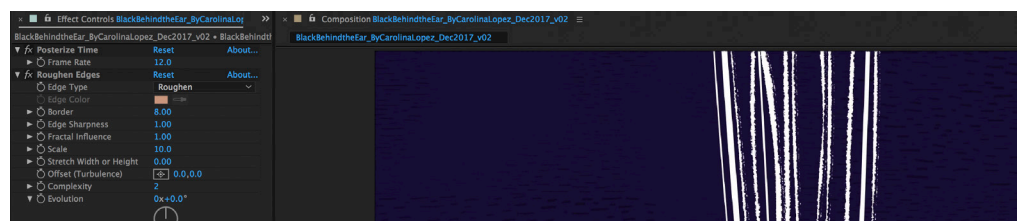
Rotoscoping techniques were used to get an organic animation of human shapes, such as the hands and the standing up woman.

Figure 12. Early stage of rotoscoping hand. January 2017



For simpler animations, morphing shapes was a fast and easy way to achieve a number of actions. By setting keyframes with the final pose in a specific time, the key frames before the final position will move on their own into the right spot. It is a visual interesting, organic motion. After achieving the wanted animation through much trial and error, the posterize frame effect was used to maintain the stop motion feel consistent with the project. The roughen edges effect accentuated the noise texture, otherwise the shapes would look too much like vector art..

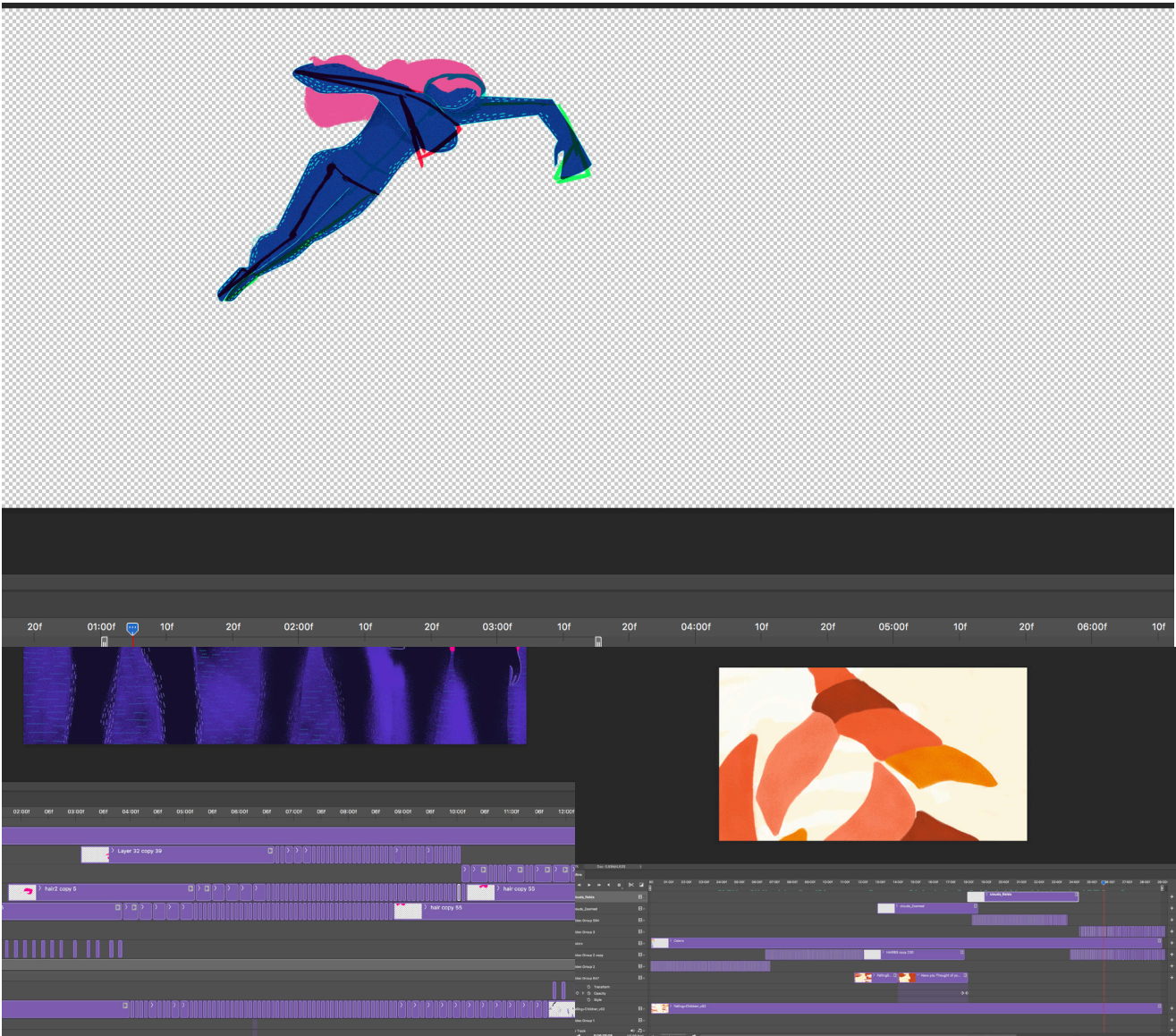
Figure 13. Example of posterizing and roughen edges effects to accentuate the stop-motion style



## Design Process

Figure 14. Frame by frame process in adobe Photoshop. Around 3,600 frames were illustrated and texturized to achieve the wanted look and feel. 2017

Planning and making guidelines was an essential step in the frame by frame process in order to achieve a natural look when rotoscoping wasn't an option, this process would consist of drawing the path the character or object would animate in, then animate basic geometric shapes for fast and easy animation guides and then polishing the shapes to achieve the wanted visual style.





## Design Process

### Texturing

Much of the video required representing the dirty, gritty struggle of the ancestors. Finding a way to add a dirt and chalk like texture in every animation was the biggest challenge of them all.

There are several ways to add texture to moving graphics in Adobe After Effects. Some methods come from tools within the program. Most methods required obtaining footage (if a moving texture is wanted) or still images. To apply the texture from the footage or still images in After Effects, a luma track mat is set. Texture can also be applied to the design itself before importing it to After Effects. A great plug-in tool used is called Ray Dynamic Texture by the animator artist Sander Van Dijk. This tool helps the animator set a texture for a specific shape by selecting the shape and clicking the added texture in the plug-in window. It is fast, has an user-friendly interface and gives all the options the track mat has without having to spend too much time problem solving.

Even though these techniques and tools are a great way to accomplish textures on moving graphics, for this specific project goals they wouldn't keep true to the handmade, raw feel looked for. Therefore, the laborious frame by frame texturing was opted for.

Figure 15. Texture compositing sample. October 2017



## Design Process

### Sound

In animation and motion graphics design, it is always important to have some sort of sound to bring the visuals to life, to tell a story as clearly as possible, or to accentuate a certain feeling.

“Hair” is a strong, beautiful poem written by the Dominican-American Elizabeth Acevedo. The way she recites her words makes you go on a roller-coaster of emotions. Even just the tone of her voice can be harrowing, at times. Luckily, she agreed to let her powerful voice be part of this project. No one else could have done it like her.

The version used for this project is a live voice recording of her by [www.SlamFind.com](http://www.SlamFind.com). The reason this is the only audio being used is because anything else would dilute or distract from her raw and pure voice. The aggressive and passionate tone she speaks with sets the exact desired emotions Black Behind the Ear is trying to emit.

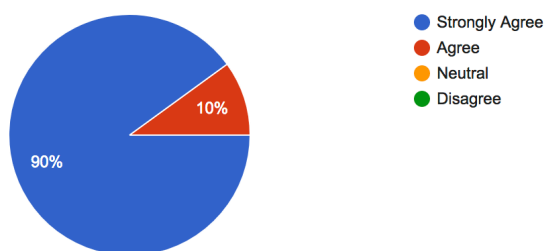


## Evaluation

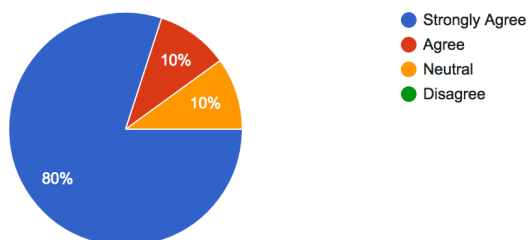
Figure 16. Questionnaire results  
by Google forms.  
December 2017

The analysis below was made after the feedback by several individuals from the target audience through Google Forms to get a percentage of the answers.

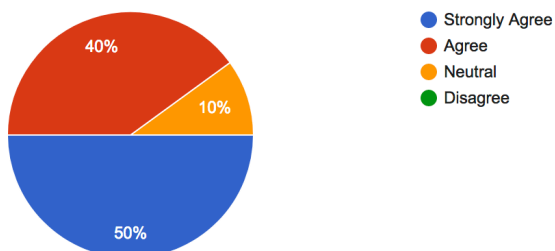
Overall, the visual style is well thought out and designed



The color palette and it's transitions, is cohesive throughout the entire piece

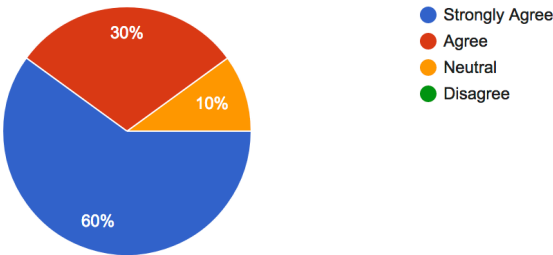


The characters are well designed

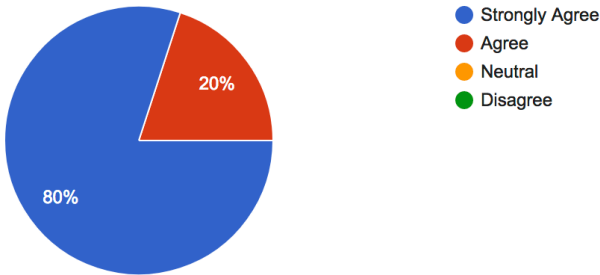


## Evaluation

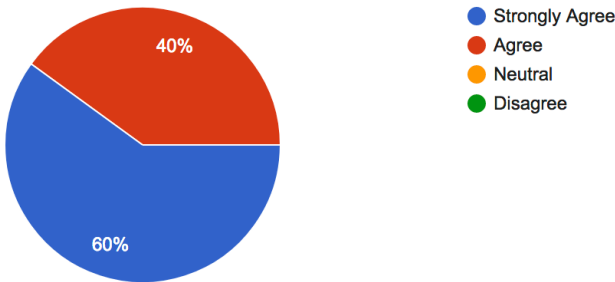
Overall the secondary shapes and backgrounds were illustrated in a way that wouldn't compete with the main elements



Overall the animation feels good

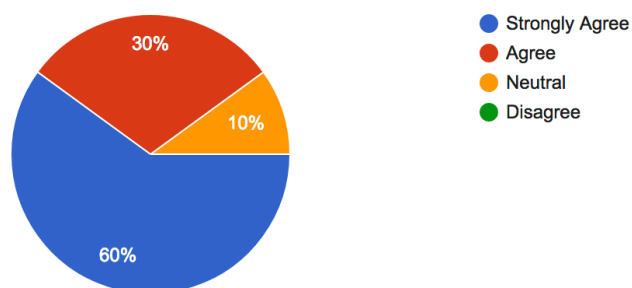


The shapes and symbols are well illustrated

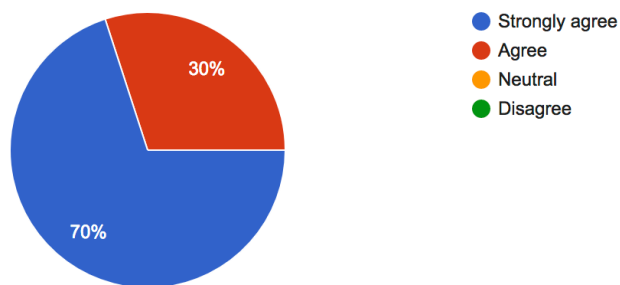


## Evaluation

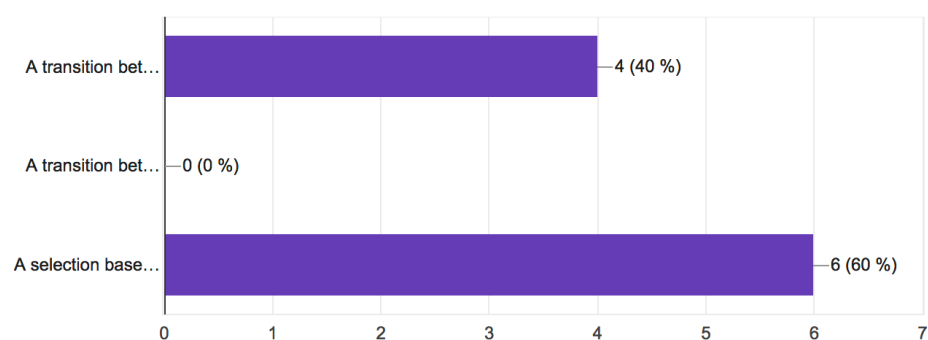
Overall the animation lineup with the voice over



The transitions felt smooth and well thought

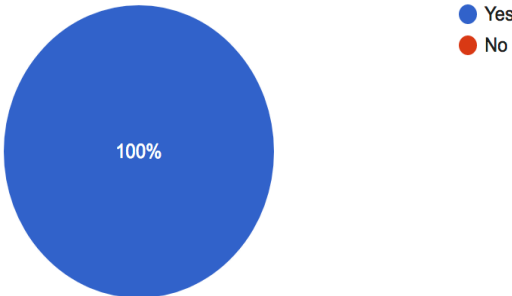


Which of the following statements can you relate to the color palette selection

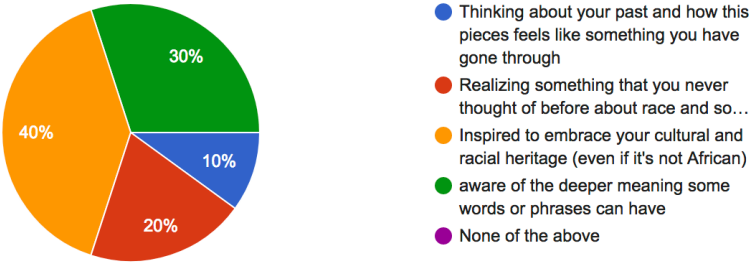


Evaluation

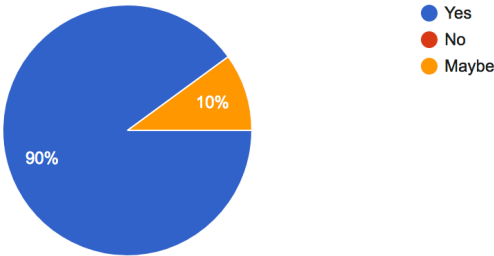
Do you feel any emotional connection with this piece?



After watching this piece, did you find yourself:



Would you ever share this piece?



## Evaluation

Any comments? What could be better, what was your favorite scene/design/technique in this video?

The braid❤️ It represents the mixture of all culture

I liked the transitions, and how the words and images come together without overpowering one another. I specially liked the images of the flowers, because those remind me of a strong Dominican women, with Flores de Cayena on their hair.

And proud of it.

I liked it a lot.

I loved the graphics and colors

my favorite scene  
the woman falling with so many allegorical elements

I loved and connected with my identity and memories, especially with the "flor de cayena".

The "eye" scene was great. How the eye is gazing upon the braid of hair. I loved that. My favorite was probably right after that though. When the afro silhouette turns into a flower (in unison with the phrase "they will be born in love with themselves"). I thought that imagery was particularly powerful.

## Conclusion

This whole process has helped me grow in so many ways, not only as a Motion Designer, but as a human being, part of a community that wasn't self-aware of a changing society. I hope this project starts many that truly make the world and human interactions better.

After several revisions, discussions, and disagreements during this process, I've learned about the importance of planning ahead. I have a better grasp of pre-production, patience (when it comes to design and animation), following a schedule, and setting realistic goals. I've learned about taking criticism in a practical way. I understand that feedback is necessary and all of it should be very seriously considered. There does come times that I need to stand my ground when I'm truly passionate about a decision, but there should be a reason behind my decision that I should be able to articulate to another person.

As a designer, I became more confident and proud of my craft and the process it takes for something to look good. As an animator, I've gained technical skills that I never thought I could learn by myself such as frame by frame animation, illustration for moving images and editing, I also put into practice many skills taught during the MFA such as rotoscoping, storyboarding, easing, controlling the velocity of the shapes, and animation basics.

Thesis Proposal.  
November 2016

# *Black* Behind the Ear

Using Motion Graphics to Encourage Self-awareness and Embrace Racial Heritage.

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MFA Visual Communication Design | School of Design  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
November 30, 2016

Committee Aproval

Committee  
Members

SignatureDate

Chief Advisor  
**Dan DeLuna**  
Associate Professor School of Design

SignatureDate

Associate Advisor  
**Chris Jackson**  
Professor, Graduate Director School of Design

SignatureDate

Associate Advisor  
**Kijana Crawford**  
Doctor, Professor of Sociology



## Abstract

### **Black Behind the Ear: Using Motion Graphics to Encourage Self-awareness and Embrace Racial Heritage.**

Carolina Lopez Corominas

“Internalized racism”(Padilla, 2001) is defined as accepting that one is inferior to others based on what society has taught them to believe. In the Dominican Republic this concept has been applied over the centuries, yet few have realized it and even fewer have tried to make a change.

This thesis project aims to design a motion graphics piece to encourage self-reflection in Dominicans on how they are practicing self-discrimination and are not being true to themselves based on what society has taught them to be. The goal is for them to reflect on this issue and encourage them to embrace their racial heritage.

## Problem Statement

Racism as defined by Marta I. Cruz-Janzen (2003), is the ability to limit a person's choices and options based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, home language or tribal affiliation. This term is commonly perceived as an action made from one individual (or group) towards other, but Padilla (2001) proposes that individuals experience an "internalized racism" by accepting they are inferior to others based on what society has taught them to believe.

The Dominican Republic is a country in which over "90% of its population possesses some degree of African decent. Yet 82% designate their race as "Indio" (native american) (Gates 2011) Race is not consciously considered that important amongst the population but is used in their everyday appraisals, sayings, descriptions and aspirations without realizing something beyond words has been conveyed from generation to generation.

From the skin tones of every person walking by, to folklore, it is clear that the mixture of European and African heritage exists. But is also clear that Dominicans are proud to proclaim their Spanish heritage and deny any connection with African line of descent. They believe that everything resembling African is equivalent to an oppressed society, and so every "*light skinned person*" is considered to be superior to everybody else.

This thesis project approaches the concept of the racial amnesia developed in the Dominican Republic through Motion Graphics with the goal of inspiring the young and teaching the older generation to accept and embrace their history and heritage.

## Situation Analysis

The Dominican Republic is a country with a vast history of mixing cultures, race and religion. With the discovery of the “New World” La Hispaniola was colonized by the Spanish and welcomed by the indigenous race that was currently inhabiting the island.

Fascinated by the Spanish people and their different physical aspects, the native devoted themselves to the colonists without realizing that soon they would become their slaves, mistreated to a point where their own race would be completely exterminated from the island’s tropical colors.

At the same time as natives were realizing what was happening and tried fighting for their survival, African slaves began to arrive to replace the fallen Tainos (Dominican indigenous), making the island “the first in the Americas to import slaves from Africa”(Gates, 2011).

Now three races inhabited the island: The Spaniards, Africans and Indigenous. White skin became equivalent to power and darker skin to the oppressed group.

All of this means that the Dominican race is not “pure”, it is the result of a mixture of colors, beliefs, taste, features with a past that symbolizes strength and fighting for what’s right.

Centuries have passed, and even though Dominicans know their history there’s a significant preference to everything that resembles light skin, straight hair, other languages. They believe that everything coming from a developed country is better than what anybody can find in their on.

“Dominicans don’t think of themselves as black. They call themselves “Indio” instead, in a reference to the color of their skin, echoing a myth of the extent of their genetic descent from the island’s indigenous inhabitants” (Gates, 2011) even though Indio could mean different ranges of skin tones. They accept they are not as white as they would love to be, but absolutely deny their black qualities as they understand that would mean accepting their possible “inferior” heritage.

Currently internalized racism hasn't been explored to the fullest in the communications field. This concept is bigger than its own appellation and influences how a culture works and thinks.

Throughout the years the younger generation has become more aware of this unspoken problem and has tried to rebel against embracing their own nature in any possible form.

Some girls do it by how they choose their fashion either by using their natural hair and the traditional woman's vintage clothes. Others express their feelings with art such as paintings like "*Las Negritas*" by Jorge Severino or poems expressing the social pressure Dominicans have on "making the race better" in order to advance in life.

Motion Graphics is a field that has not yet tried to approach the issue of racism or internalized racism as an important social subject that should be addressed to bring awareness and self-reflection. There isn't any major motion design that embraces the Dominican history or folklore and even less is targeted to the new generation.

## Survey of Literature

To be able to communicate the main idea of *Black Behind the Ear* there were several areas of research that had to be investigated in order to have a more complete understanding of the context, what works, what doesn't and the technical part of design.

So the following three areas of focus were the basis of the project's survey of literature to accomplish a more complete research before thinking of design and implementation.

### History and Context

#### 1. Mujer y la Esclavitud en Santo Domingo (Women and Slavery in Santo Domingo)

Batista, Celsa Albert. *Mujer Y Esclavitud En Santo Domingo*. Santo Domingo: CEDEE, 1993.

This book focuses on the women and their roles during the pre-colonial era. It explains how African women arrived and their roles as "slave producers" as well as their integration to slave work.

In addition to the past, Batista also adds the cultural factors that Dominican Republic inherited from the African culture, such as artifacts, music, religion, culinary art and artisan expressions. It describes the social status of African women and the color discrimination developed in Dominican Republic.

#### 2. Criollos—El Nacimiento De La Identidad Americana Y De La Cultura Americana En La Hispaniola (Criollos: The Birth of a Dynamic New Indo - Afro - European People and Culture on Hispaniola)

Guitar, Lyan. *Criollos—El Nacimiento De La Identidad Americana Y De La Cultura Americana En La Hispaniola*, Vanderbilt University

This article focuses on the history of the race integration developed in the Island "La Hispaniola". Which race predominated according to the location and the reasons of why certain locations had more Africans than others that were predominantly Spaniards.

### 3. Identidad cultural y religiosidad popular (Cultural Identity and Popular Religion)

Andújar Persinal, Carlos. *Identidad Cultural Y Religiosidad Popular. Santo Domingo, República Dominicana*: Editora Cole, 1999.

The sociologist, Carlos Andújar, focuses on the racial amnesia that has been developed in Dominican Republic for centuries and explains the cultural identity and how connected it is to the African culture.

### 4. Black in Latin America

Gates, Henry Louis. "Black Behind the Ears." *In Black in Latin America*, 119-45. NYU Press, 2011. Accessed September 12, 2016. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qfpmh.8](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qfpmh.8).

This book talks about how Latin Americans identify themselves and how they react towards being called African.

In the chapter called: The Dominican Republic: "Black behind the Ear" Gates specifies how the Dominican culture praises the Spaniard regardless of the mistreatment towards the Taínos (Dominicans indigenous) and reject the Africans who were the ones that, in combination with the Taínos, fought for their freedom.

It encourages you to reflect on how significant decisions, for example how the Dominican Independence Day wasn't when the Spaniard left, but when the Haitians left, which proves that the discrimination and rejection towards the blacks has been present for centuries.

## 5. Out of the Closet: Racial Amnesia, Avoidance, and Denial. Racism Among Puerto Ricans.

Cruz-Janzen, Marta I. "Out of the Closet: Racial Amnesia, Avoidance, and Denial. Racism among Puerto Ricans." *Race, Gender & Class*, 2003, 64-81.

This article demonstrates a current situation on racial acknowledgment in Puerto Rico. This circumstance is similar to the one in the Dominican Republic helping the viewer to understand how race is handled in the Caribbean and what thoughts exist on the matter .

## 6. Viewing Videos: Class, Differences, Black Women and Interpretations of Black Femininity.

Wingfield, Adia Harvey, and Melinda Mills. "Viewing Videos: Class, Differences, Black Women and Interpretations of Black Femininity." *Race, Gender & Class*, 2012, 348-67.

To understand the many reasons why societies such as the Dominican avoid being related to a black community such as Africans, "Viewing Videos" explains how the pop culture had been portraying black women as something negative to society.

Consequently, everything related to "black" could be considered as vulgar, promiscuous, violent, uneducated, dirty and many other descriptions that are implied from movies, music videos and lyrics.

It demonstrated, via a focus group, when showing current Rap music videos to black women, how false these representations were and they agreed it contribute to the negative perception some societies had about colored women.

## 7. Muñeco negro y muñeco blanco. (Black doll and white doll)

[Http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmixZ0qzhrW4OgdgZaxZu3w](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmixZ0qzhrW4OgdgZaxZu3w). “Contacta Psicólogos. Experimento Kenneth Y Mamie Clark. Muñeco Negro Y Muñeco Blanco. Español.” YouTube. 2014. Accessed October 13, 2016. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoofU7XbD\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoofU7XbD_A).

This psychology experiment is the only project close to this project’s goal.

It presents Dominican children who are being asked about several situations and who is the responsible for each. The experiment demonstrates how Dominicans see themselves and how they react towards a colored person not even feeling a marginal relationship with a dark skin people.

Nevertheless it isn’t considered a fast paced piece that is targeted to the Dominican youth. This type of video is ordinarily used for research or teaching but not as a social media piece.

## **Educating through art.**

### 8. Use of Poetry to Facilitate Communication about Diversity: An Educational Model.

Blake, Michelle Emery, and Suzie T. Cashwell. “Use of Poetry to Facilitate Communication about Diversity: An Educational Model.” *Race, Gender & Class*, 2003, 96-108.

This article reveals experimental education with other tools such as Poems and how receptive people were of using this method.

Metaphor is described as “explaining the unexplainable” (Hynes1988) and “can further enrich communication through persuasion” (Sopory & Dillard 2002). Subsequently, it would be considered “good media” to encourage self-reflection to a society with respect to their actions and way of thinking.



This form of communication can make the message more relatable, personal and for such topic as “Black Behind the Ear” is trying to approach, this method could inspire each person to embrace his or her true self and encourage social empowerment.

### **Motion Graphics and Art (Tutorials and Inspiration)**

#### **9. Cándido Bidó: El Artista y su Obra (Cándido Bidó: The Artist and his Work)**

Tolentino, Marianne De., and Cándido Bidó. *Cándido Bidó: El Artista Y Su Obra*. Barcelona: C. Bidó, 1980.

For this project’s visual style the main focus is to make it relatable with the Dominican Republic’s culture and people, therefore several Dominican artists were taken into consideration for the visuals of the design.

Cándido Bidó is one of the most famous fine artists from the Dominican Republic, his representative visual style could be recognized by any Dominican because of his bright selection of colors to represent the island and its people and his peculiar way of portraying the real country men and women.

This book shows his pieces explaining each aspect and the thinking behind them.

#### **10. República del Color (The Color Republic)**

De Los Santos, Danilo. *República Del Color*.

Inspired by Héctor M. Valdez film, República del Color presents several Dominican artists and focuses on the color selection the Caribbean painters used to express their ideals and/or panoramas.

They also studied how for centuries color is used to represent the island for centuries and the reason behind those decision.

## 11. Beatriz Milhazes: Jardim Botanico.

Ostrander, Tobias, Tanya Barson, and Paulo Herkenhoff. *Beatriz Milhazes: Jardim Botanico*. Miami: Perez Art Museum Miami, 2014.

Beatriz Milhazes is a Brazilian fine artist, whose work is formed by colorful geometric shapes that create a collage of figures that work together to make a cohesive piece.

Artists like Milhazes are important for this project since it helps to form the basis for the color inspiration of this investigation as well as for how the transitions between scenes could look like.

## 12. Yadid Rubin: Plowed Color

Yadid Rubin: *Plowed Color*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2010.

As well as examining Latin American Art, it is also important to observe what else is being produced in the world.

Yadid Rubin is an Israeli fine artist whose basic shapes tell a whole story because of his use of color. His importance to color is a primordial factor for this project visual style, since at the end that's what is going to make the piece relatable and easy to understand.

## 12. Motion Graphics: New Directions in Motion Design

*Moving Graphics: New Directions in Motion Design = Les Nouvelles Tendances Du Motion Design*. Barcelona: Promopress, 2012.

This book presents several successful motion pieces. It helps this project by serving as an inspiration on what visuals work in the present and what is consider good motion graphics.

### 13. Cel Animation Tutorial

Colombolele. "How to Simulate Cel Animation Using After Effects." YouTube. 2015. Accessed October 13, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJi9NRvuz1I>.

Emanuele Colombo is a motion designer from Italy. He has created several After Effects tutorials in YouTube including this cel animation style.

To be able to accomplish the visual style goal of this project it's necessary to learn how cel animation works and how to create such style with the new digital tools available today.

## **Design Ideation**

Black Behind the Ear is a 2:00 minute long motion graphics piece that tries to represent the internalized racism developed in the Dominican Republic.

With a mixture of abstract shapes and symbolism as well as the voice of Elizabeth Acevedo in her “hair” poem, this project’s goal is to encourage self-reflection towards a social stigma that hasn’t been formally identified in order to embrace self-awareness and racial heritage.

## Moodboard

The visual style of “*Black Behind the Ear*” consists of a warm color scheme to represent that bright, colorful and happy feeling Dominican Republic portraits and geometric non-so perfect shapes to represent most of the population and the African’s thick, strong figure.

The artists behind the visual style inspiration for this project can be found at the following sources:

1. Cándido Bidó, Dominican artist, whose use of textures, colors, shapes and symbolism inspired the most for this project’s visual style and the reflection on what represents the Dominican Republic.

Source: Tolentino, Marianne De. and Cándido Bidó. *Cándido Bidó: El Artista Y Su Obra*. Barcelona: C. Bidó, 1980.

2. Beatriz Milhazes, Brazilian artist whose style of representing landscapes with abstract shapes inspires the transitions for this motion piece.

Ostrander, Tobias, Tanya Barson, and Paulo Herkenhoff. *Beatriz Milhazes: Jardim Botânico*. Miami: Perez Art Museum Miami, 2014.

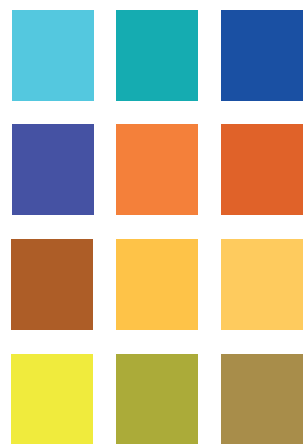
3. Brandon Boyd, American artist, singer, songwriter. His style, compared to the last two artists is less colorful, however, he tells a story with simple lines and a mixture of drawings.

It is very important for this project to emphasize the metaphorical element of “hair” used in the poem, so Boyd’s line usage helps to understand how someone can create texture with a simple yet elegant and appealing style.

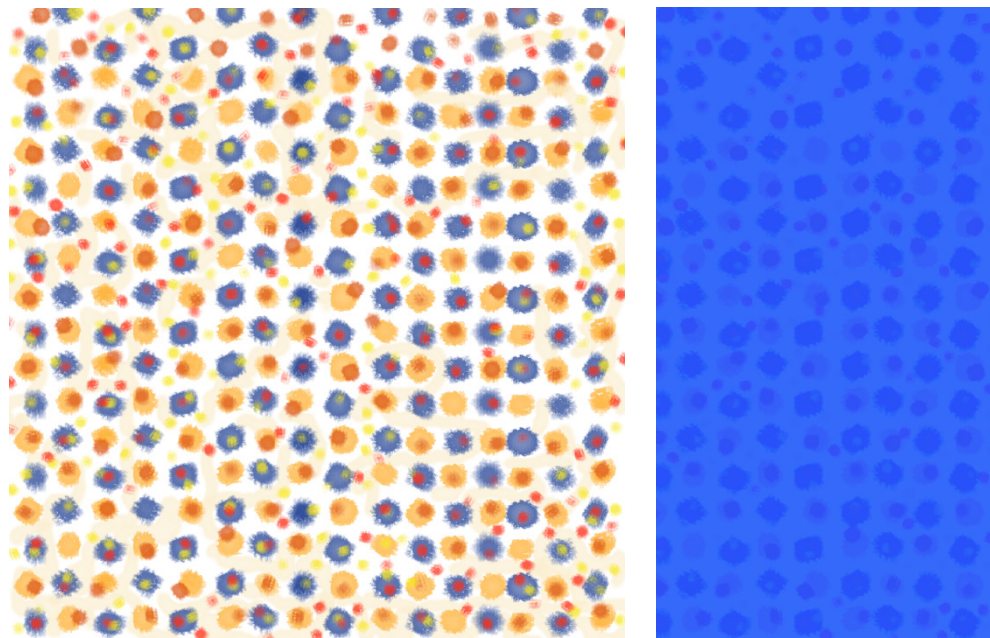
Source: “Brandon Boyd.” Brandon Boyd. Accessed October 13, 2016. <http://brandonboyd.me/index.html>.

## Colors and Textures

Color Palette



Textures samples



## Transitions

One of the key points in accomplishing the visual style for this piece will be smooth and continuous transitions between scenes.

In order to represent the poem with its own tone and how it changes from one example to others without the listener realizing, the transitions will be mostly based on morphing shapes to move from one idea to the other.

Such continuity will be accomplished with the cel animation style made digitally on Adobe After Effects, Adobe Photoshop, and abstract shapes.

## Script

### "Hair" by Elizabeth Acevedo

"My mother tells me to fix my hair. And by "fix," she means straighten. She means whiten. But how do you fix this ship-wrecked history of hair?

The true meaning of stranded, when trusses held tight like African cousins in ship bellies, did they imagine that their great grand-children would look like us, and would hate them how we do?

Trying to find ways to erase them out of our skin, iron them out of our hair, this wild tangle of hair that strangles air. You call them wild curls. I call them breathing. Ancestors spiraling. Can't you see them in this wet hair that waves like hello?

They say Dominicans can do the best hair. I mean they wash, set, flatten the spring in any loc – but what they mean is we're the best at swallowing amnesia, in a cup of "*morir soñando*", die dreaming because we'd rather do that than live in this reality, caught between orange juice and milk, between reflections of the sun and whiteness.

What they mean is, "Why would you date a black man?" What they mean is, "*a prieto cocolo*" What they mean is, "Why would two oppressed people come together? It's two times the trouble." What they really mean is, "Have you thought of your daughter's hair?"

And I don't tell them that we love like sugar cane, brown skin, pale flesh, meshed in pure sweetness. The children of children of fields. Our bodies curve into one another like an echo, and I let my curtain of curls blanket us from the world, how our children will be beautiful. Of dust skin, and diamond eyes. Hair, a reclamation.

How I will break pride down their back so from the moment they leave the womb they will be born in love with themselves.

My mother tells me to fix my hair, and so many words remain unspoken. Because all I can reply is, "You can't fix what was never broken."

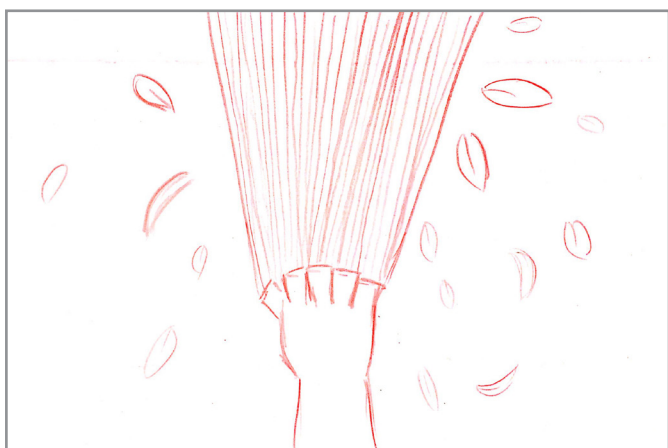




My mother tells me to fix my hair.



And by “fix,” she means



straighten.



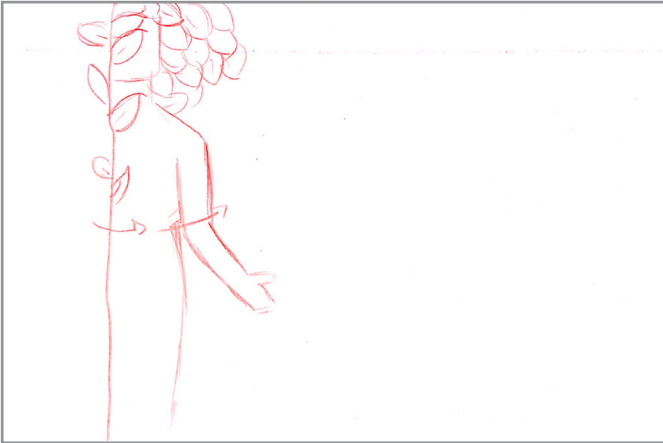
She means whiten.



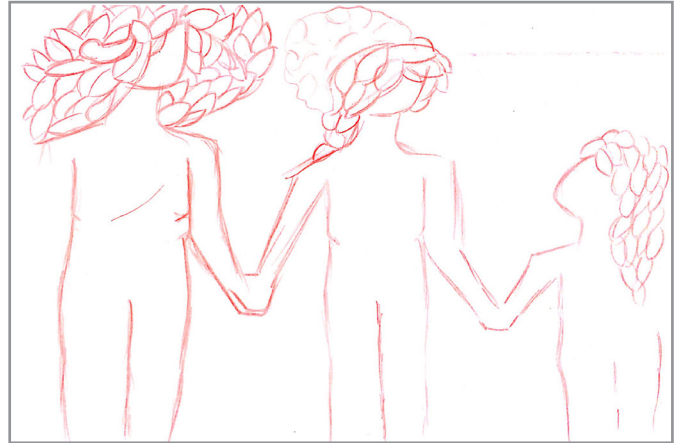
But how do you fix this ship-wrecked history of hair?



The true meaning of stranded,



when trusses held tight like African cousins in ship bellies,



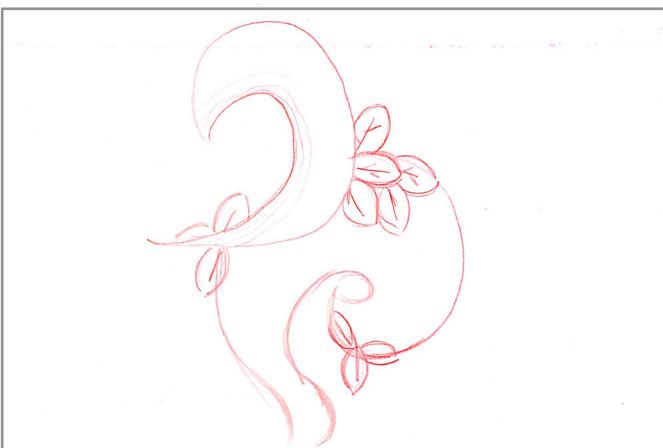
did they imagine that their great grand-children would look like us,



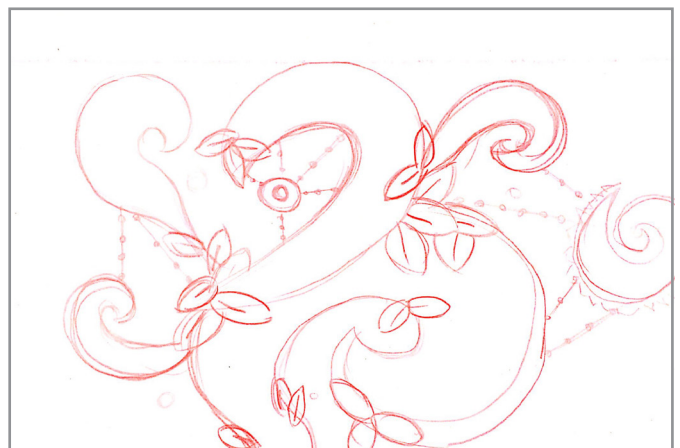
and would hate them how we do?



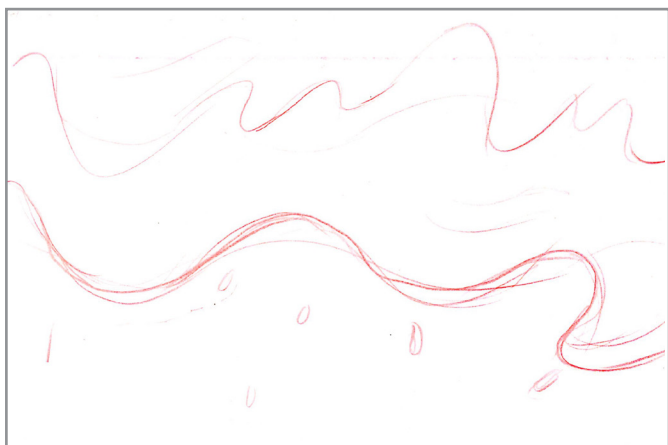
Trying to find ways to erase them out of our skin,  
iron them out of our hair,



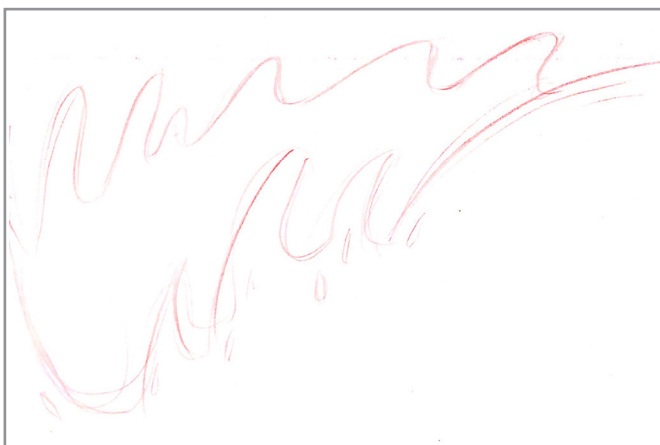
this wild tangle of hair that strangles air.



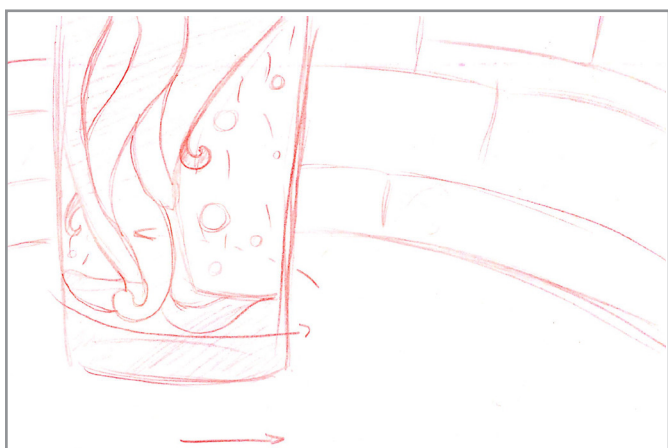
You call them wild curls. I call them breathing.  
Ancestors spiraling. Can't you see them in this wet hair  
that waves like hello?



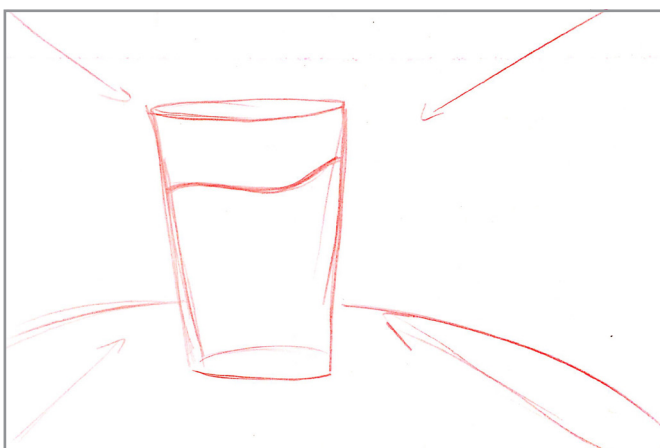
They say Dominicans can do the best hair. I mean they wash, set, flatten the spring in any loc



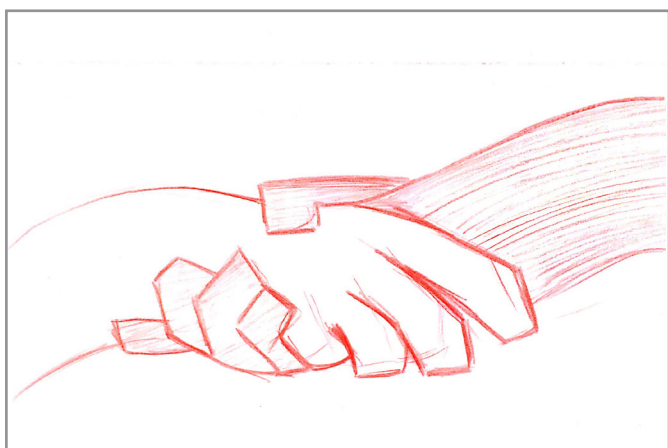
but what they mean is we're the best at swallowing amnesia,



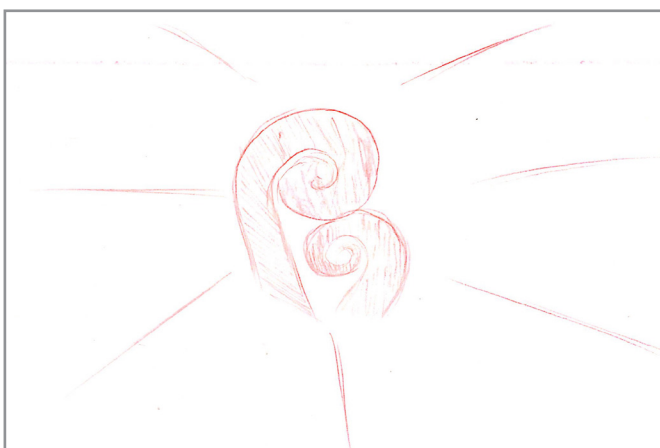
in a cup of "*morir soñando*", die dreaming because we'd rather do that than live in this reality,



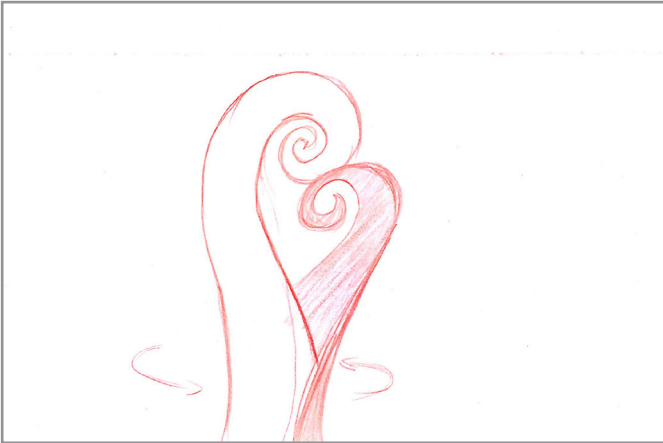
than live in this reality,



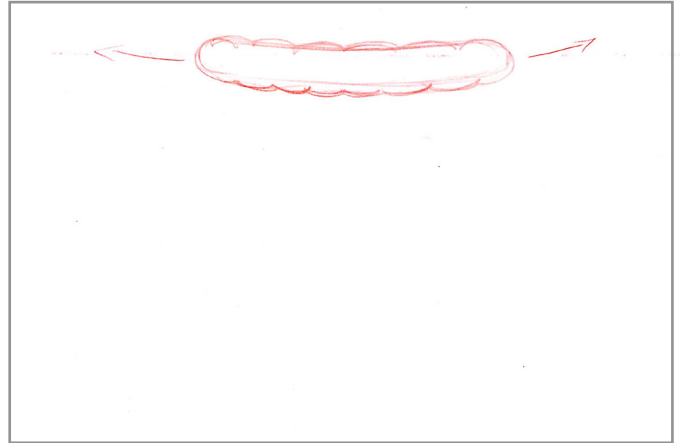
caught between orange juice and milk,



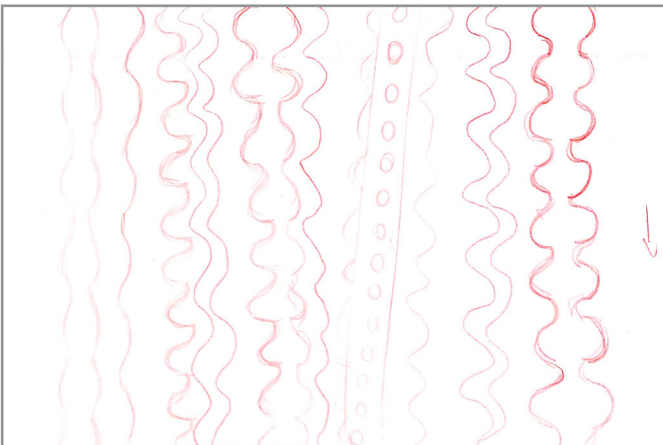
between reflections of the sun and whiteness.



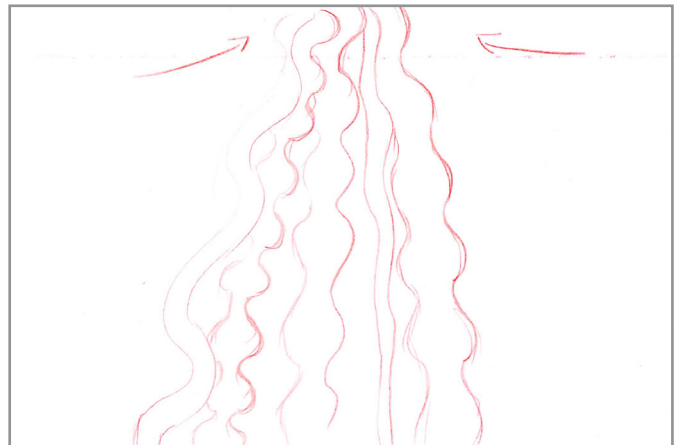
What they mean is, “Why would you date a black man?” What they mean is, “*a prieto cocolo*” What they mean is, “Why would two oppressed people come together? It’s two times the trouble.”



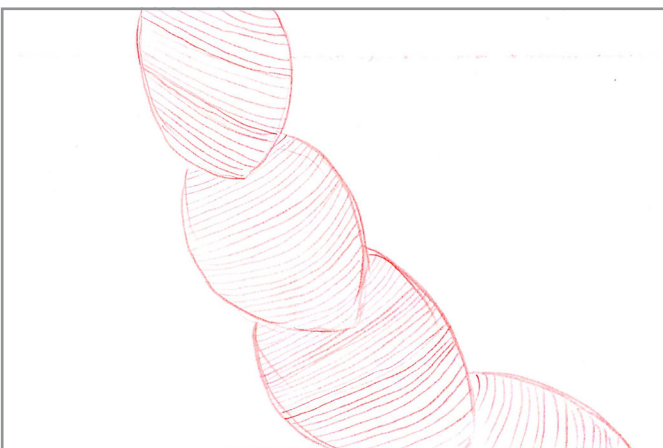
What they really mean is,



“Have you thought of your daughter’s hair?”



And I don’t tell them that we love like sugar cane,

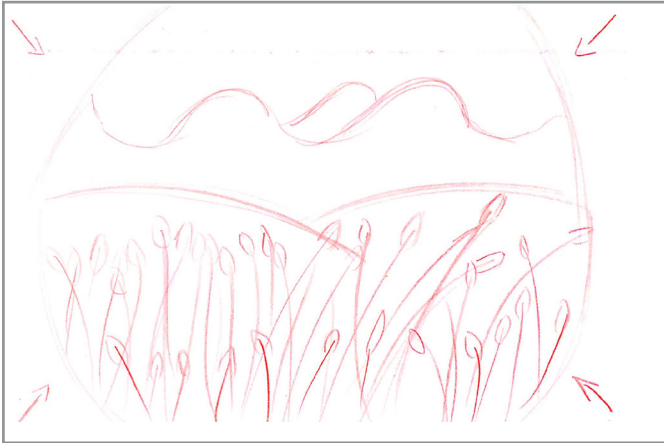


brown skin, pale flesh, meshed in pure sweetness.

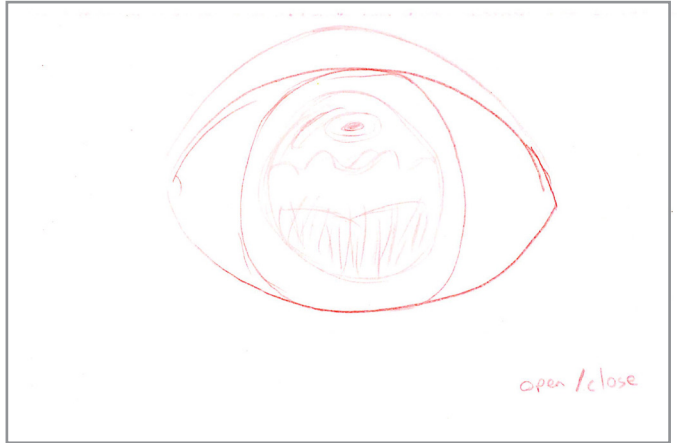


The children of children of fields. Our bodies curve into one another like an echo,

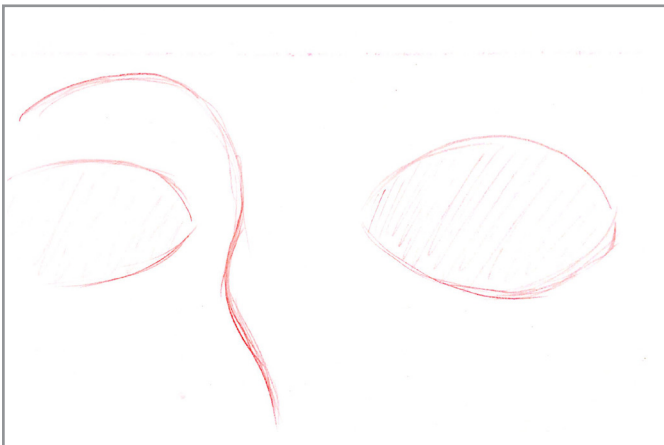




and I let my curtain of curls blanket us from the world, how our children will be beautiful.



Of dust skin, and diamond eyes.



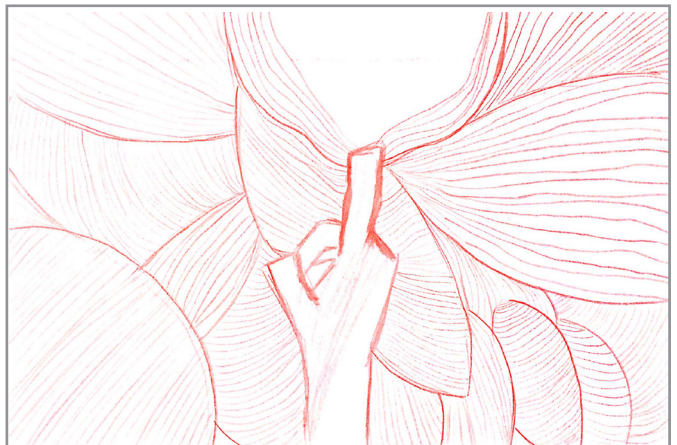
Hair, a reclamation.



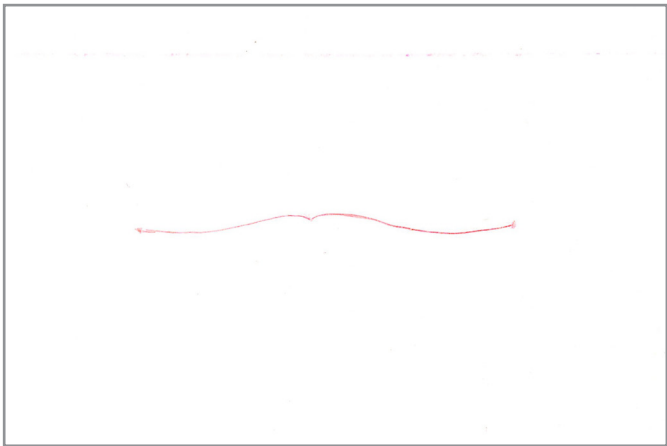
How I will break pride down their back so from the moment they leave the womb they will be born in love with themselves.



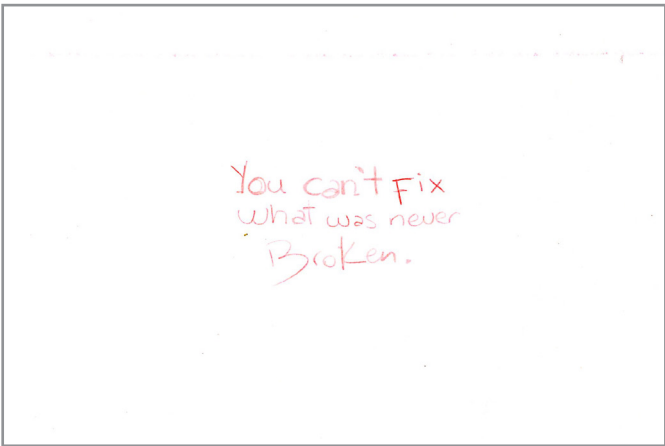
My mother tells me to fix my hair,



and so many words



remain unspoken. Because all I can reply is,



“You can’t fix what was never broken.”



## Assets

3D Software	Adobe After Effects	Adobe Illustrator	Adobe Photoshop	Other
Lines to symbolize hair	Leaves Falling	Leaves	Hand Animation (Frame by frame animation)	Textures: Finger Painting
Two curves representing love	Line with leaves growing	Hand Illustration		
Curly hair lines	Women	Glass		
	Curved lines for transitions	Field		
	Ocean			
	Glass with curved lines			
	Liquid inside glass			
	Ponytail			
	Braid			
	Eye			
	Woman from eye			

## Methodology

The methodology that will be applied to this project is the usage of Motion Graphics to approach a social stigma. Therefore, digital screen design requirements need to be taken into consideration, such as: color formatting, pixels, size, frames per second and screen margins.

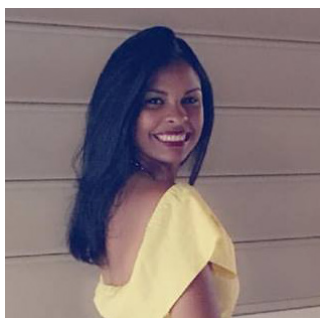
The programs anticipated to successfully designing and delivering “*Black Behind the Ear*” are Adobe Creative Cloud, Cinema 4D and Maya.

Adobe Creative Cloud: Since this project visual style is mainly 2D vector graphics, Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop will be the main tools to design the elements for this animation.

For the animating part Adobe After Effects will be the main tool where everything will be placed and key framed.

Cinema 4D and/or Maya: these 3D software help making some of the animation faster and more polished in the time frame that this project needs to be done. These 3D software are very helpful for this projec when elements rotate or some transitions that could only work in 3D.

## Target Audience



### **Laura Martínez**

*“Black only me”*

Born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Age: 25

Likes big city lifestyle

Studies: Business, Graduate level

Race: Hispanic, “indio”

Social Class: Medium-high

Interests: Dance and going to the gym

Personal Values: Solidarity, humility.

Acknowledges her skin color as black but doesn't relate it to African heritage. Doesn't care being called “morena” (“sweet way to call a black girl”).

Doesn't mind hanging with other colored people and doesn't treat them differently

*“Making the race better”* when dating, is something in the back of her head.

Social Media preference:



### **Carola Perez**

*“I love embracing my natural curls”*

Born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Age: 26

Likes nature and calm places

Studies: Management, Graduate level

Race: Hispanic, “indio”

Social Class: Medium

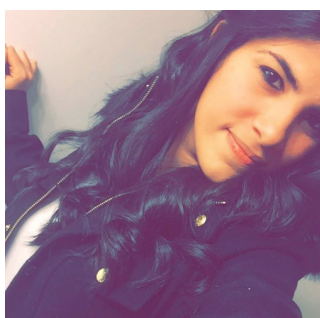
Interests: Music, dance, history

Personal Values: Honesty, respect and ethic

She is aware of her African heritage and thinks all dominicans should embrace their natural self. She accepts her looks and takes a stand on changing how society sees everything resembling to black.

She speaks her mind and embraces the dominican folklore.

Social Media preference:



### **Patricia Guzmán**

*“I spent a long time and money in “fixing” my hair”*

Born in Santiago, Dominican Republic

Age: 22

Extroverted, enjoys social ambient and hanging out to parties

Studies: Law, Graduate level

Race: Hispanic, “indio”

Social Class: Medium-high

Interests: Dance, going out, fashion and dogs

Personal Values: Sympathy, Responsibility and Generosity.

She doesn't feel related to an African heritage at all. When she sees natural curly hair or afro she thinks of it as a “pajón” (messy hair). She wouldn't leave her hair in it's natural shape.

Places that she's interested in going are Europe, big cities in USA, Mexico and Punta Cana.

Social Media preference:



## Deliverables

The final outcome of this project is a 2 minutes long motion graphics video, HD (1920\*1080) in QuickTime movie format. As such, the video could be seen in any platform such as mobile devices, computers and screens.

For this project Elizabeth Acevedo gave permission to use her voice reciting her poem "*hair*" in the voice over.

*Behind the Ear* is designed for social platforms that will allow the video to become viral if successful. Such social platforms are Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo and pieces of the video could possibly be posted on Instagram.

## Implementation Strategies

The implementation of this project is based on current knowledge of Adobe Creative Cloud (especially After Effects), where transitions and basic animation fundamentals need to be taken into consideration to express the feeling of the visual style to its fullest.

The textures for the animation are going to be created in Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop, making a series to create an image sequence to overlay on top of the animation.

Cel animation style is also a very important part for this project's overall visual style since the "hand drawn" impression is one of the personal ambiances that the animation seeks to portray. To accomplish this, animating in Photoshop and the usage of noise filters in Adobe After Effects will be taken into consideration.

For more complex animations, like the movement of the lines that resemble hair, rotations, or transitions between scenes, 3D software such as Maya and Cinema 4D are also taken into consideration to create those effects while still keeping the overall 2D style.

## Dissemination

*Black Behind the Ear* will be posted to online platforms such as social media, blogs and video websites for easy access and as a fast share option. This video will also be added to motion graphics/ short animated films competitions that can be found on [www.filmfreway.com](http://www.filmfreway.com) like the following:

- Big Muddy Film Festival
- Long Island Film Festival
- Adobe Design Achievement Awards
- Reel 13 Short Film Contest
- Brooklyn Film Festival
- Manhattan Film Festival
- La Femme Film Festival

## Evaluation Plan

This project's evaluation plan will consist of three main activities that will help determine and/or support the idea on how Dominicans think about their African heritage. Also to observe how they react after watching the piece and obtaining feedback in order to improve the final product.

People that are part of the target audience will be interviewed with a group of questions in order to understand how Dominicans feel towards black communities and how they define their own race, even though they would be considered black when traveling to another country.

After the video is complete, the same audience will be presented with the same questions after watching the video. The main goal with this is to see if self-reflection towards embracing one's true race heritage is being encouraged after watching the piece, and also to get feedback on what could be improved and what draws their attention more.

The last evaluation step will be participating during Imagine RIT, where students get the chance to present their work to people outside RIT and other students. This is a great opportunity to receive feedback mainly on the visual style to see how many people are drawn, in a fast paced activity setting, to watch the piece and even to try to understand it beyond possible cultural differences.



## Pragmatic Considerations

All necessary software/hardware is available in RIT, Visual Communication Design graduate program facilities.

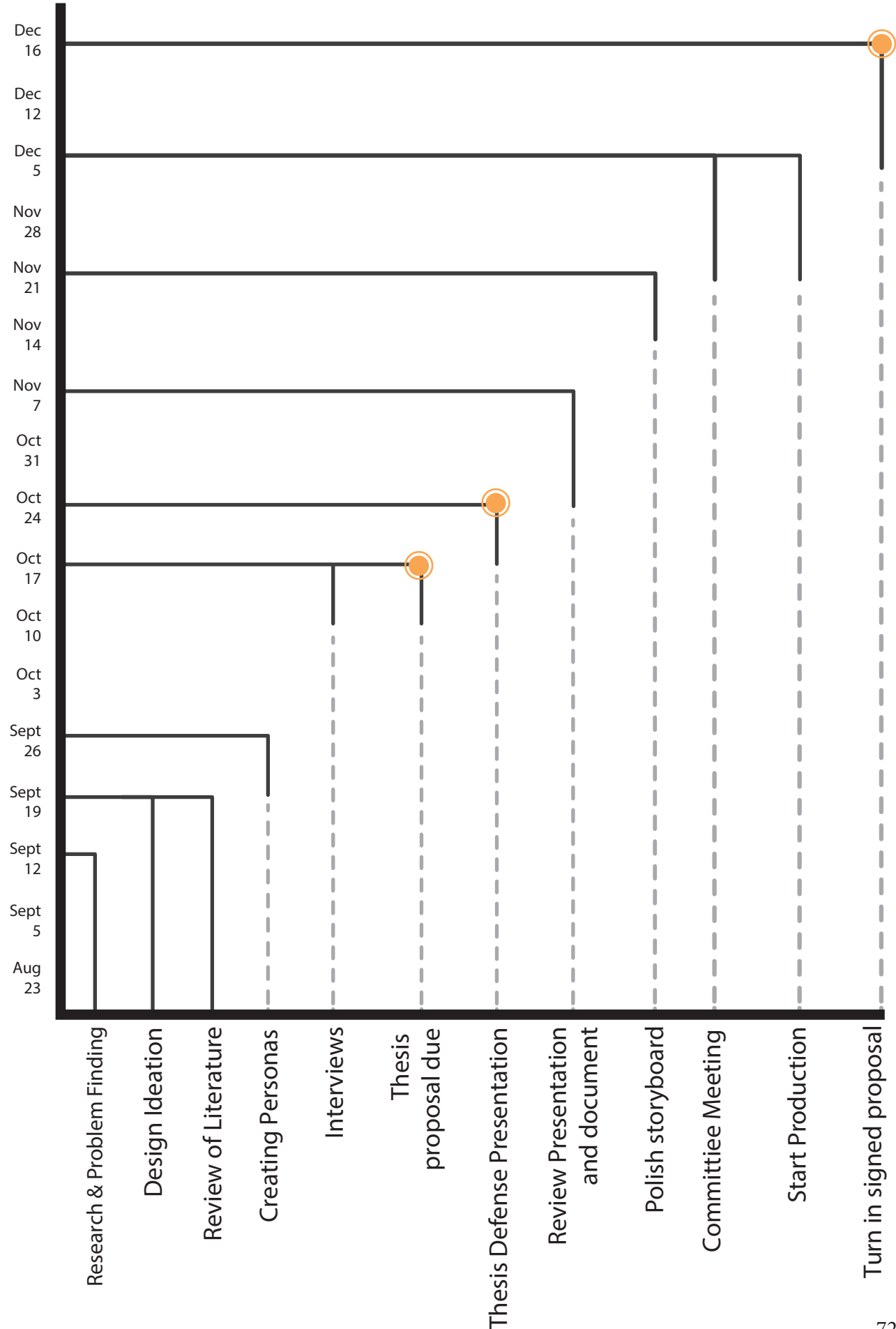
Copyright : Written permission has been obtained from the creator Elizabeth Acevedo, to use her voice and poem called "*hair*" with the understanding that this is a student project and not for profit.

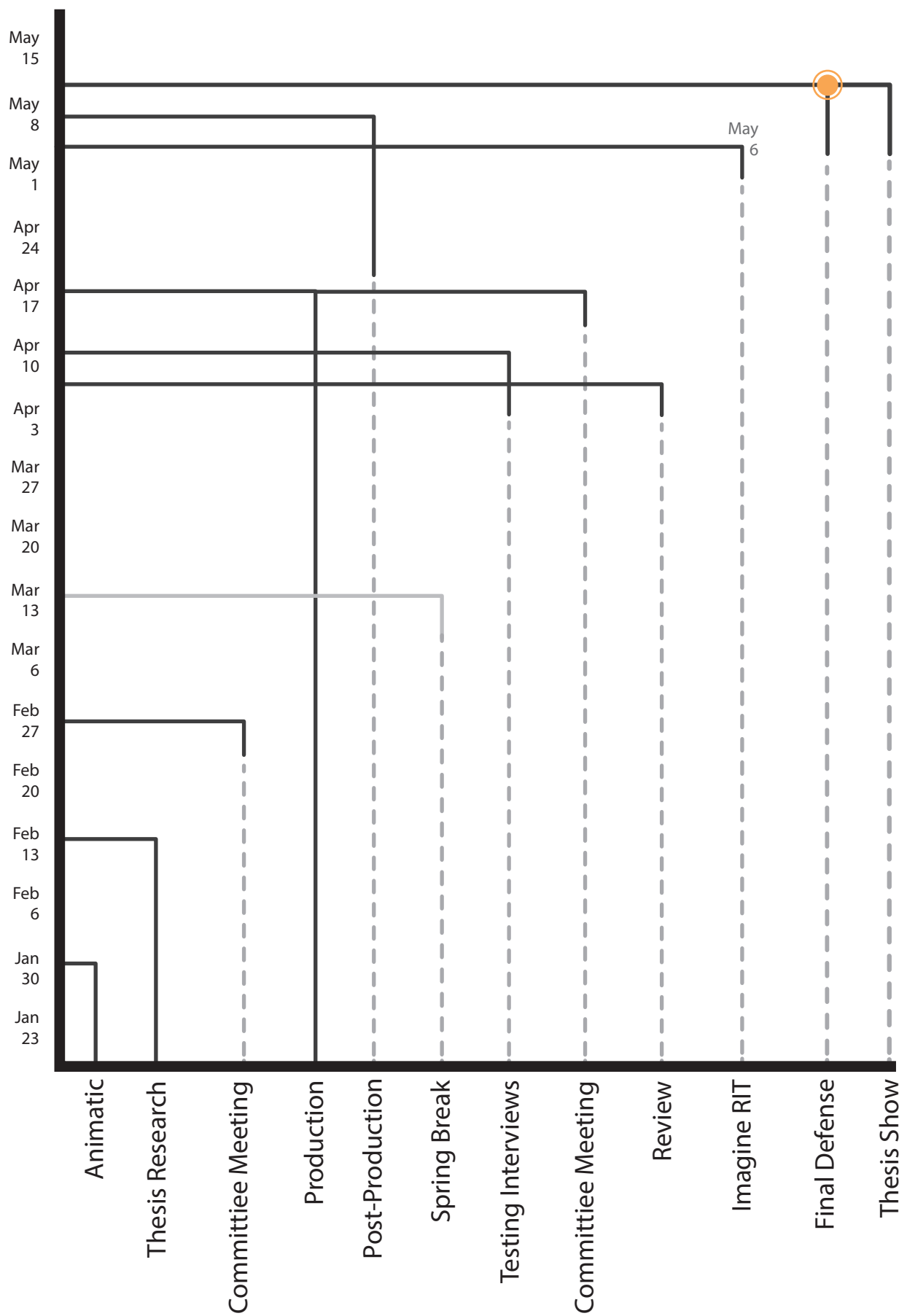
Conference/ competition fees: To be determined

## **Timeline**

The following timeline represents how the project is going to be done with the timeframe given.

The timeline is divided by the two semesters that Visual Communication Design gives its students to work on this final Project.





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